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ABSTRACT

This paper reports results of a survey of 47 homeless adults, interviewed in Ada County, Idaho. Most respondents were male, white, currently single, with no religious preference. The mean number of years of formal education was 11.6. Seventeen percent of the sample were American Indians. Ninety-three percent were unemployed. Twenty-five percent of respondents' income went to purchase alcohol, although almost 40% spent no money on alcohol. One-third reported a physical handicap, one in six had spent time in a mental hospital, almost half had been in a detoxification center, and 75% had served time in jail. Thirty-nine percent reported using illegal drugs, particularly marijuana. Two-thirds of respondents seldom or never see members of their family of origin; most never saw their family of procreation. Compared to studies from larger urban areas, this population was more transient, had a higher unemployment rate, contained a high proportion of American Indians, and had more difficulty with the criminal justice system. This report concludes that this sample of homeless people seems to represent individuals with relatively normal values and backgrounds who have experienced abnormally high emotional stress without social connections or mental stability to help them cope with such stress. This report contains 10 tables and 16 references. (DHP)

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THE NEW VAGABONDS?

HOMELESSNESS OUTSIDE THE MEGALOPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

In the Spring of 1987, forty-seven homeless adults were interviewed in Ada County, Idaho. While this sample was derived from an area much less urbanized than most such studies, general characteristics were quite similar to the homeless studies conducted elsewhere. Specifically, this sample was composed primarily of young, white, single males who had relatively high levels of education and who were chronically unemployed.

The Ada County homeless were generally more transient, more likely to have spent time in jail, and contained a higher percentage of American Indians than in similar descriptive studies conducted in large urban areas.

In addition to general demographic data, this survey also included economic and social data not normally found in most research.

Part I: Introduction and Background

Throughout this decade there has been a growing awareness about the difficulties experienced by homeless people. In spite of the increased attention, this group has proven to be an elusive segment of the population. Estimates of the numbers for homeless people range from a low of 250,000 to a high of four million. (General Accounting Office-GOA, 1985). The homeless have also proven difficult to define and describe. Many studies are inconsistent in such basic descriptors as sex ratios, racial composition, and the proportions of women and children. In spite of these difficulties, there are a growing number of programs that have made services to this population more available. In 1984, the federal government implemented the Federal Emergency Feeding Program to deal with the problems of hunger. Other federal programs were also funded, such as the Jobs Bill, which provided assistance to local communities which were experiencing slow economic growth. Through various sources, funds have been made available to local communities for providing basic services to local homeless populations, even though this is a group about which we know very little and who have proven to be quite difficult to reach.

The descriptive studies which exist present two consistent conclusions. First, it is generally agreed that the problem of homelessness has been increasing at the rate of ten percent per year since 1980. Second, most studies agree that the homeless have become a more diverse group encompassing not only the "traditional skid row alcoholic," but also the mentally ill, the unemployed, and a growing number of women and children. (Department of Housing and Urban

Development--HUD, 1984). It is no accident that growing public sympathy for the homeless has directly corresponded to the broadening of this group's composition. The more the homeless have come to resemble society, the more sympathetic society has become.

While many studies are available, most focus on general data; details about how the homeless survive remain sketchy. A second major shortcoming of the currently available research is that most studies have been conducted in large metropolitan areas such as Boston, New York, and Los Angeles. As a result, we know even less about the homeless population in smaller urban areas and rural communities.

Part II: The Homeless in Boise, Idaho

In the early spring of 1987, a research project was begun at Boise State University to study the homeless population in Boise, Idaho. We were particularly interested in comparing characteristics of homeless people in Boise, a small urban community in the intermountain west, to those characterstics defined for the homeless in studies conducted in large urban areas. In addition, we also wanted to explore in depth the social and economic backgrounds of homeless people. It is to this research that we now turn.

The Study Site

Boise is the capital of Idaho; it is the central city of the standard metropolitan statistical area which encompasses all of Ada County. Ada County has a population base of approximately 200,000 people. Over 18 percent of the state's population resides in Ada County (Bureau of Census, 1980). The Boise valley experienced a very rapid growth in the 1970s, but during the 1980s this rapid growth has slowed dramatically.

The poverty rate for Boise is consistently below the national poverty rate. In 1979, Boise's poverty rate stood at 8.3 percent compared to the national rate of 12.4 percent. Likewise, the unemployment rate is consistently low in Boise. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was estimated at 3.9 percent for April 1987 (Idaho Department of Employment, 1987).

Little information has been available about the homeless population in Boise. The little that is known about the population has been anecdotical coming from three local soup kitchens or from one of the ten major food banks in the county. The authors, in a 1985 review of service programs serving the homeless in Ada County, roughly estimated the area's homeless population to be between 75 and 150 individuals nightly.

Study Methodology

The General Accounting Office, in a 1984 study on homelessness, defined a homeless person as: "...those people who lack the resources and community ties necessary to provide for their own shelter" (GAO, 1985). This is the general definition of homelessness that we used in our study. But if a person does not have a residence, telephone, job, or community ties, how is that person to be identified and selected to participate in a research study? A major problem which plagues research on the homeless population is an inability to develop a sampling frame and to access potential respondents. By definition, homeless people do not have a permanent place of residence, and there are few other means to identify a distinct, stable population; thus traditional research sampling methods are most difficult to implement.

To deal with these problems, a number of strategies were employed. A senior social work student at Boise State University with a field

practicum in a "store front" agency which had introduced him to a number of homeless, destitute people collected the data. To elicit additional cooperation among this population it was determined that a small amount of money would be paid to respondents. This was a valuable strategy, as most people contacted agreed to be interviewed on the basis that they would receive $10 for completing the interview.

An availability sample was used, as more sophisticated sampling methods were found to be impractical. Interviews were gatered from individuals who utilized the soup kitchens and individuals who did not normally frequent public or private social service agencies. The interviewer was able to make successful contacts in parks, alleyways, dumpster sites, and the public library. A target goal of 40 interviews was exceeded as eventually 46 interviews were completed. Each interview took approximately two hours to complete. The interviews were conducted from February to April, 1987.

Part III: Findings

Who Are the Homeless?

Our relatively small sample included a wide variety of respondents: single parents, a battered woman, a retarded adult, and the more traditional "street" people. As reflected in Table 1, most of the respondents were male (91 percent), white (78 percent), currently single (77 percent), and had no religious preference (78 percent). There was a wide variation in education and age. The mean age was equal to 38.8 years; the youngest respondent was 21 years old, while the oldest respondent was 63 years old. The mean number of years of formal education was 11.6 years; one person completed only two years of school and two persons completed 16 years of school.

Particularly of note in this data are the large number of American Indians and the high educational level of respondents. Less than one-half of one percent of the Ada County population in 1980 was American Indian, and a little more than one percent of Idaho's population is American Indian, compared to 17 percent in the homeless sample. Thus, there would appear to be a large over-representation of American Indians in this homeless population.

The median educational level for the homeless sample was 12.2 years. However, only 57 percent of the homeless sample had completed high school. These data are very similar to the Ada County adult population in which the median level of education is 12.9 years; but unlike the homeless population, 82 percent of the persons over 25 in Ada County completed high school (Bureau of Census, 1980). These differences in educational achievement don't appear to be as great as one might expect.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The general demographic characteristics of the homeless sample reported here are remarkably similar to those found in other studies on the homeless. As reflected in Table 2 there are no significant differences between the four cities shown in relation to age, race, and education. However, there was a statistically significant difference in the number of men and women represented in the four samples. (Los Angeles and Boston had a larger number of women in their samples.) Clearly, in all study sites the majority of respondents were men.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Do the Homeless Have Job Skills?

What is the work history of the homeless? Are homeless people currently employed? Do the homeless have job skills? Table 3 shows that, by far, the largest majority of the respondents were unemployed (93 percent). Furthermore, of the three persons employed, only one was working full time. Unemployment is a major issue confronting this population; however, full-time employment, when obtained, generally placed respondents above the poverty line. The 1985 poverty level for single persons under 65 was $5,250; 50 percent of the respondents earned between $6 and $8 per hour in their last full-time job, which would place their annual earnings at a minimum $12,480.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Unemployment is not only an acute issue, but one which has chronically afflicted this homeless population. One person in five has not worked a full-time job in the past five years. Over 50 percent of the sample has not held a full-time job in the past two years, and only 14 percent has worked full time in the past year. A majority of respondents are also unsuccessful in obtaining part-time work, and less than one in two respondents worked part time in the past year. While

unemployment and underemployment appear to be a major issue for this homeless sample, they are not without job skills. Over half, 59 percent, are veterans; one in five has completed some vocational training, and two-thirds of the respondents claim specific job skills (e.g., mechanic, construction worker, or heavy equipment operator). Eight respondents, 17 percent, reported owning their own business.

Nonetheless, chronic unemployment is a major problem for this population, and the number of respondents employed were 11 to 14 percent less than found in more metropolitan areas. While not statistically significant, this difference seems unusually large. Perhaps this reflects the more transient nature of this population.

Chronic unemployment and underemployment is reflected in the sample's weekly income and spending patterns. Confidence in these numbers should be viewed with some skepticism, as respondents were asked to estimate the amount of money received in the past week and the percent of money expended in different categories. Almost two-thirds of the respondents reported earning money through employment secured through the Casual Labor Office. One-third of the respondents had earnings from the sale of plasma, one-quarter of the respondents engaged in recycling cans and newspapers, and one-sixth of the respondents stated that they had resorted to panhandling. Weekly revenues, aside from welfare benefits, were very meager; the high was $100 per week, and one person reported receiving no money in the week. As reflected in Table 5, the mean amount of money received was $32.51, and one-half of the respondents received less than $27.50. The most frequently reported weekly non-welfare income for respondents was $10. One-third of the respondents reported receiving some type of welfare benefit, most generally a disability benefit. (Idaho does not have a general

assistance program.) The mean weekly welfare benefit for the 15 respondents receiving payments was $41.94. The mean total money available for the sample was $45.96 per week, which translates into an annual income level of less than $2,400--an amount well below the official poverty line for single persons.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Twenty-five percent of our respondents' income resources went to purchase alcohol. The median expenditure per week on alcohol was $9. In contrast, a significant number of respondents, almost 40 percent, reported spending no money on alcohol. The next largest expense item was food, with median expenditures of $7.50 per week. Twenty-two percent of all resources were directed towards the purchase of food. As with the purchase of alcohol, two-fifths of the respondents report not spending any money on food. The next largest item for this homeless sample was lodging. However, only one in four of the respondents reported spending money for shelter. Items such as travel, tobacco, clothing, and other miscellaneous expenditures consume slightly more than one-third of all resources.

What is the Physical and Emotional Health of the Homeless?

Many are concerned that the homeless are a highly vulnerable population, consisting of the mentally ill, the chronic alcoholic, and the physically disabled. These disabilities make it extremely difficult for this population to participate in society--in work, in interpersonal relationships, and in the social structure. It is difficult to define

precisely the extent of disabilities and the degree of incapacitation that stems from these disabilities. However, it is clear that the homeless, in fact, experience these personal and social traumas at a much higher rate than the general adult population.

Among our sample, one in three reported a physical handicap, one in six had previously spent time in a mental hospital, and almost one in two had been in a detoxification center. While time spent in jail and/or in prison might not be considered a disability, it suggests difficulty in coping and adjusting to life's demands. Three out of four of the respondents served time in a city or county jail, with one-quarter having served time in a state or federal prison.

Thirty-nine percent of the sample reported using illegal drugs. The primary drug of choice was marijuana. However, seven percent of the sample preferred heroin and six percent reported amphetamines or cocaine as the drug of choice. Eleven percent of the sample reported using drugs within the past week. An additional seven percent reported use within the past month. Seven percent stated that they used drugs daily. While one-third of the sample had received treatment for alcoholism, it is obvious that other drugs are also a serious problem among this population.

Compounding the specific troubles of this homeless population is the multiple nature of their problems. Only seven percent of the sample reported no difficulty in any of the four areas of physical health, mental health, alcohol and substance abuse, or criminal justice. Two-thirds of the sample experienced problems in two or more areas, thus reflecting a high level of coping difficulties.

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

High rates involving previous stays in mental hospitals, detoxification centers and prisons are characteristic of other homeless populations. The findings from Boise's homeless population are not substantially different from that found in other areas of the country, as shown in Table 7. Only in the prior utilization of detoxification is there a statistically significant difference between Boise's homeless and other data. A study in Chicago found only 33 percent of homeless had stayed in a detoxification center, compared to 46 percent of the Boise sample and 50 percent of the Boston sample. One possible explanation for this difference is the larger number of young women in the Chicago sample compared to Boise and Boston. Twenty-four percent of the Chicago sample were women, compared to samples of 7 percent women in Boise and 17 percent women in Boston. Nevertheless, these data show homeless populations in large urban areas, as well as small urban areas, have experienced higher rates of mental hospitalization, substance abuse, and incarceration than the general adult population.

INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

Social History

Are the homeless in Boise displaced area residents? Do they have family support systems? What is their degree of mobility? How do they move about? What are their plans for the future? Most respondents in the Boise sample appear to be very mobile. They have few contacts with family members; and unemployment or under-employment is a major issue in determining future plans.

Only one-third of the sample was born in Idaho, but most respondents (77 percent) were born in the west. Also reflected in Table 8 is that the parents (who are still alive) of respondents generally live in states other than Idaho. Furthermore, two-thirds of the respondents seldom or never see family members, and only 22 percent of the respondents felt their family was a resource to them.

INSERT TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE

Respondents generally came from average size families consisting of one brother and two sisters. Respondents' fathers had less than a high school education, averaging 10 years of education; but over 90 percent of the fathers were regularly employed at some type of skilled employment. Among the respondents' mothers, 49 percent were employed most of the time, and mothers typically had more years of education than fathers. Twice as many of the mothers had attended some college, 20 percent, compared to fathers, 10 percent.

While the majority of respondents have few contacts with their family of origin, the same is also true for contacts with family of

procreation (spouse and children). One in five reported being currently married, but of these only one-third were currently with their spouse. Sixty percent of the respondents had children, with only one person caring for that child at the time of the interview. Most respondents with children stated that the other parent had responsibility for these children. There was very little contact reported between the respondent and family of procreation. In fact, nine percent did not even know their family's whereabouts.

Religion played a relatively important role during many of the respondents' childhoods, as three out of four had some religious affiliation in childhood, and over 60 percent were encouraged to attend church as a child. However, only 20 percent of the respondents reported a current religious affiliation and less than half of these attended church on a regular basis. Thus, while there is a history of religious affiliation, this is not seen by a majority of the respondents as a current source of support.

The lack of social supports is also reflected in the short length of time that respondents had been in Boise. Table 9 reflects that one quarter of the respondents had been in Boise for one week or less, and another one-fourth had been in Boise less than six months. Slightly more than one-third of the respondents had been in Boise for one or more years. With less than two-thirds of the sample residing in Boise less than one year, this reflects the very transient nature of this group of homeless people. Living arrangements are consequently very temporary with the most common shelter being abandoned buildings (47 percent). Additionally, one in four of the respondents sleep and live out of their cars or trucks.

If respondents are new to Boise, from what states did they come? As also reflected in Table 9, the largest percentage (43 percent) of respondents traveled to Boise from other intermountain states such as Washington, Oregon, Montana, and Utah. One in five of the respondents was already a Boise resident or traveled to Boise from elsewhere in the state. The next largest percentage of respondents traveled to Boise from California. Two-fifths of the respondents stated that they had lived in the area prior to coming to Boise for more than two years, while an almost equal number stated that they had been in the previous area for less than six months. The major reason given for leaving the prior area of residence was an inability to find permanent full-time employment.

In moving from one area to the next, the majority of respondents (54 percent) hitchiked, but almost one-third traveled in their own car or truck. Respondents preferred to travel alone, with only one-third traveling with a spouse or other companion. While traveling, 93 percent of the respondents stated that they obtained food at soup kitchens and missions. Respondents who owned an automobile often used it to sleep in, while the majority of other respondents (62 percent) slept outside (excludes respondents with cars). The picture that emerges of this homeless population is one of isolation, even in their patterns of travel.

Would this homeless population settle down if they could obtain full-time employment? Two out of three of the respondents said yes. However, the job would have to pay at least $6 per hour, and employment would have to be found rapidly. Over one-half of the respondents stated that they did not plan to stay in Boise for more than a few weeks.

INSERT TABLE 9 ABOUT HERE

INSERT TABLE 10 ABOUT HERE

Summary

Boise's homeless population is composed primarily of single, young, educated, white males, over half of which are veterans. Alcoholism, mental illness, physical disabilities, legal difficulties, and unemployment are serious problems faced by the homeless in Boise. Furthermore, Boise's homeless are socially disconnected and isolated with few family supports, a view also supported by their preference for traveling alone and their avoidance of religious connections. Consistent with the homeless populations in other areas, this group of people in Boise are very much out of mainstream America with tenuous ties to jobs, family, and church.

The interconnected nature of many homeless people's problems seem obvious from the study data. Specifically, the lack of family resources combined with job loss and emotional turmoil are complementary problems that often leave few alternatives to the street life. Alcohol problems are also prevalent, and one cannot help but speculate as to how other difficulties exacerbate the alcoholism and vice-versa. Review of the social histories confirm the impression that many of these individuals

had been hit with not one crisis, but a series of traumas, resulting in a devastating emotional one-two punch that leaves them without personal or financial resources. Like the hoboes of the great depression, the samples of homeless people in Boise seemed to represent individuals with relatively normal values and backgrounds, but who have experienced an abnormally high degree of emotional stress without the social connections or mental stability to cope.

In relation to homeless populations from larger urban areas, the homeless population of Boise was more transient than has been reported in most other studies, with fifty percent of the sample having lived in the city for less than one year. In addition, Boise's homeless suffer slightly higher unemployment rates than most other study groups and they receive less money from welfare programs. The Boise homeless also contained a relatively high proportion of American Indians who are virtually unrepresented in other studies. Finally, Boise's homeless appear to have had much more difficulty with the criminal justice system, with almost three-fourths of the respondents having served time in jail. With these few exceptions, however, the Boise sample was quite consistent with samples taken in more metropolitan areas.

Table 1

General Demographic Characteristics of Study Sample for Homeless in Ada County

(N = 46)

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	4	9%
Male	42	91
Race		
Black	1	2
Hispanic	1	2
American Indian	8	17
White	36	78
Marital Status		
Married	10	22
Widowed or divorced	20	43
Single	15	33
Missing	1	2
Current Religion		
Catholic	2	4
Protestant	6	13
Other	2	4
None	36	78

(table continues)

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Mean age	38.8	
Youngest	21	
Oldest	63	
Education		
Mean years of education	11.6	
Fewest years of education	2	
Most years of education	16	

Source: Boise State University Homeless Study

Table 2

General Demographic Characteristics of Study Sample for Homeless in Ada County Compared to Other Areas

	Ada County (N=46) Percentage	Los Angeles (N=238) Percentage	Baltimore (N=51) Percentage	Boston (N=78) Percentage
Gender[a]				
Female	9	23	6	17%
Male	91	77	94	83
Race				
Minority Group	22	Not	39	23
White	78	Available	61	77
Education				
High School Grad.	66%	67%	50%	69%
Less than HS Grad.	34%	33%	50%	31%
Mean Age (years)	39	37	38	34

[a] $\chi^2 = 12.09$, DF = 3, $P < .01$.

Sources: Boise State University Homeless Study; Ellen Bassuk, et al, "Is Homelessness A Mental Health Problem?" American Journal of Psychiatry, 141:12, December 1984; Pamela Fisher, et al, "Mental Health & Social Characteristics of the Homeless: A Survey of Mission Users," AJPH, May 1986; Homeless, U.S. Accounting Office, April 9, 1985.

Table 3

Employment Characteristics of Study Sample

for Homeless in Ada County

	Frequency	Percentage
Presently Employed (N=45)		
Yes	3	7%
No	42	93
Year in Which Last Held Full-time Employment (N=41)		
1987	6	15
1986	12	29
1985	6	15
1984 and Before	17	41
Year in Which Last Held Part-time Employment (N=46)		
1987	20	43
1986	17	37
1985	4	9
1984 and Before	5	11
Number of Different Jobs Held Past Two Years (N=46)		
0	2	4
1 to 3	16	35
4 to 7	24	52
8 or more	4	9
Prior Military Employment--Served in Armed Services (N=46)		
Yes	27	59
No	19	41

(table continues)

	Frequency	Percentage
Completed Vocational Education (N=46)		
Yes	9	20
No	37	80
Evidence of Job Skills (N=45)		
Yes	29	64
No	16	36
Evidence of Job Stability* (N=46)		
Yes	15	33
No	31	67

*Evidence of job skills and job stability based on interviewer's judgement in which respondent communicated job skills in a particular field such as a plumber, diesel mechanic, heavy equipment operator, etc; job stability judged on the basis that respondent maintained employment for extended period of time.

N's may vary due to missing or incomplete data

Source: Boise State University Homeless Study

Table 4

Employment Status of Study Sample for Homeless in Ada County Compared to Other Studies

Presently Employed	Ada County (N=45) Percentage	Los Angeles (N=238) Percentage	Baltimore (N=51) Percentage	Boston (N=78) Percentage
Yes	7%	21%	21%	18%
No	93	79	79	82

$X^2 = 5.37$, DF = 3, $P > .05$.

Sources: Boise State University Homeless Study; Ellen Bassuk, et al, "Is Homelessness A Mental Health Problem?" American Journal of Psychiatry, 141:12, December 1984; Pamela Fisher, et al, "Mental Health & Social Characteristics of the Homeless: A Survey of Mission Users," AJPH, May 1986; Homeless, U.S. Accounting Office, April 9, 1985.

Table 5

Weekly Income and Expenses for Homeless in Ada County

(N=46)

Weekly Revenues Excluding Welfare Benefits	
Mean	$32.51
Median	27.50
Mode	10.00
Weekly Revenues from Welfare Benefits	
Mean	13.35
Median	0
Mode	0

Percentage of Revenues Expended for Items

	Percentage of Total Resources ($45.96)	Median Expenditure
Alcohol	25%	$9.00
Food	22	7.40
Lodging	17	0
Travel	11	0
Tobacco	9	4.50
Clothing	1	0
Other	15	3.00
Total	100	$40.50

Source: Boise State University Homeless Study

Table 6

Physical and Mental Disabilities and Criminal Justice Contacts Among Homeless in Ada County

(N=46)

	Percent Reporting
Physical Health Status Measures	
Hospitalized past year	7%
Self report of physical handicap	35
Mental Health Status Measures	
Previous mental hospital stay	17
Experience hallucinations or delusions	33
Lived in a group home or shelter home	17
In-patient alcohol treatment	33
Previous detoxification center stay	46
Frequently abuse alcohol	43
Attend Alcoholic Anonymous	41
Use "street drugs"	39
Contacts with Criminal Justice System	
City or county jail time	74
Federal or state prison stay	17

Source: Boise State University Homeless Study

Table 7

Mental Disabilities and Criminal Justice Contacts
for Homeless in Ada County Compared to Other Studies

Measure	Ada County (N=46) Percentage	Chicago (N=716) Percentage	Baltimore (N=51) Percentage	Boston (N=78) Percentage
Previous Stay in:				
Mental Hospital (a)	17	23	33	N/A
Detoxification Center (b)	46	33	N/A	50
Prison (c)	17	17	16	15

(a) $X^2 = 3.79$, DF = 2, $P > .05$.

(b) $X^2 = 11.24$, DF = 2, $P < .01$.

(c) X2 = .194, DF = 3, $P > .05$.

Sources: Boise State University Homeless Study; Peter H. Rossi, et al, "The Urban Homeless: Estimating Composition and Size," Science, March 1987; Ellen Bassuk, et al, "Is Homelessness A Mental Health Problem?" American Journal of Psychiatry, 141:12, December 1984; Pamela Fisher, et al, "Mental Health & Social Characteristics of the Homeless: A Survey of Mission Users," AJPH, May 1986.

Table 8

Place of Birth and Family of Origin Information

For Homeless in Ada County

(N=46)

		Percent Reporting
Place of Birth		
	Idaho	35%
	Other intermountain states	22
	California	20
	Midwestern states	15
	Southern states	4
	Southwestern states	2
	Other	2
Parents' Current State of Residence		
Mother:	Idaho	26
	State other than Idaho	41
	Deceased	33
Father:	Idaho	17
	State other than Idaho	39
	Deceased	43
Frequency of Family Contacts		
	Frequent	30
	Seldom	33
	Never	37
Family Considered a Resource		
	Yes	22
	No	78

Source: Boise State University Homeless Study

Table 9

Length of Time in Boise, Current Living Arrangement, Prior State of Residence, Time in Area, and Reason for Leaving as Reported by Homeless in Ada County

(N=46)

	Percent Reporting
Time in Boise	
One week or less	24%
Two to 26 weeks	24
26 to 52	17
More than 52 weeks	35
Present Living Arrangements	
Abandoned building	47
Motor vehicle	28
Temporary shelter (mission)	7
Shared living arrangements (apartment or house)	17
State of Prior Residence	
Intermountain states (excluding Idaho)	43
Idaho	22
California	11
Midwestern states	9
Southwestern states	7
Other	9

(table continues)

	Percent Reporting
Length of Time in Prior Area	
One month or less	15
1 to 6 months	28
6 to 24 months	15
24 months or more	41
Reasons for Leaving Prior Area	
Unable to obtain employment	39
Escape family difficulties	13
Other	48

Source: Boise State University Homeless Study

Table 10

Attitudes Among Homeless to Staying in Boise

(N=46)

	Percent Reporting
Would Stay if Obtained Full-Time Job	
Yes	67
No	33
Length Time Plan to Stay in Boise	
Few days	20
Few weeks	35
Permanently	35
Don't know	11

Source: Boise State University Homeless Study

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